

## EGG ISLAND

By Adèle Marie Shaw



It all came from my speaking a language known to few people save the native born. For that reason I've taken to lying awake nights in a kind of remorseful terror, thinking how happy we all might be at this moment if I'd not given a loose rein to my imagination.

If it weren't for a prejudice against bromides I should take a heavy dose and go to sleep. As it is, I am trying to write. Writing will almost always send me to sleep. I never had a correspondent I cared a snap of my finger for—excepting John, and from him, thank God, I am not often separated.

When I think of him words come faster, and this eternal buzzing and whirling of all I ever did or might have done, this rattling and clattering in my brain that ticks away at such a ridiculous pace as if the balance-wheel were broken, all this quiets down and things seem more natural. He is the best man in God's world. I shall stop every few minutes, as I write, to go and look at him asleep. It gives me courage to see his face. It is beautiful always, and when he sleeps it has the fine tenderness of a little child's.

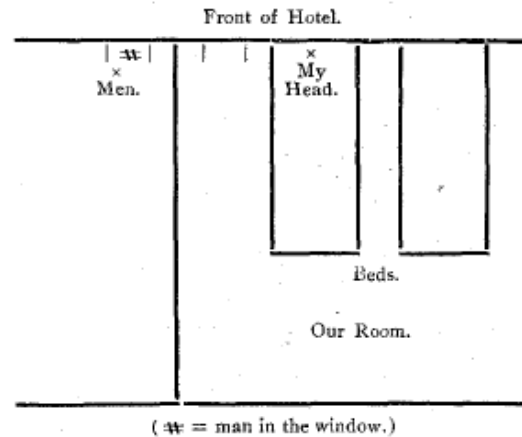
I suppose to other people he is like any well-preserved, middle-aged man, and I fear most of them envy him his money more than they do his goodness.

I was thinking of him as I lay awake in the hotel at Sassnitz a night of last September, and of how little our money had had to do with our happiness. I had seen content like ours in the faces of the fishermen and their wives as they packed the herring on the beach.

Our beds were side by side, and I reached out toward him just to be sure he was there, and when I touched his hand it opened and held mine fast and I could not draw it away. He must have been dreaming, for he muttered something I could not understand every time I tried to move my arm, and at last I

gave it up and lay quite still, glad to feel the life in his lean fingers.

I have always been a light sleeper, and have lived many hours wide-awake in the dark; indeed I never seem quite so fully awake as on nights when I do not sleep. That was why I heard so distinctly every word said by our neighbors. All the windows were open, and the two men who were speaking were close to theirs. One of them must have been sitting in the window itself, for I heard his voice as clearly as if he had been in the room with us.



I have gone over that conversation so many times in my own mind that I can repeat it, I believe, parrot-like, sentence by sentence, without a conscious thought. If I try to translate it and write it down it will seem tame enough, no doubt, and a stranger could never comprehend the queer fascination of the original dialogue, listened to in the dead of night, with the Baltic pounding in below the cliff and not a flicker of moonlight to brighten the blackness.

Besides, it recalled the time, years before, when my father and I had spent a curious winter in Beletsk, and a summer still more strange in the hill country beyond the capital.

It all came back to me as I listened.

"There was no proof"—were the first words that held my attention—"no real proof?"

"No," was the answer, "but there was a spy for witness, a man who talks English and does all the dirty work for the Bureau, and there was the train laid. It's always better to 'make an example.'"

"What was he—a German?"

"No: English, I believe. A young fellow without connections—no one to stir up the kettle for him. His agents, or somebody, advertised in England and France, but no one came to us. Probably no one knew his plans. He was just going through to the mountains—hunting, by his outfit."

"But if he came with a political purpose?" the second voice interrupted.

I could imagine the shrug that answered. The words, if there were any, I did not hear.

"Where was he taken? Was it far?" The second voice again asked.

Only part of the answer came to me.

"——, uninhabited, completely uninhabited. It's a sort of egg-shaped rock with a bit of vegetation and a very comfortable stone hut, but solitary as hell. South, hundreds of miles, a hopeless voyage—somewhere between the Falkland Islands and the South Pole; at least——"

Here the waves clamoring at the rocks interfered again.

"But why all that trouble? Why not ——" The rest evidently suggested a simpler alternative. I could hear a match struck in the pause before the reply and the odor of cigars floated in to me with the smell of the salt spray.

"Never quite safe. England's 'arm is long.' Besides——" The tone became so bitter that it set me grieving for the speaker—"there was a marriage to be arranged, and there was a man whose presence, so they feared, would dampen the ardor of the bride. He was sent to conduct the prisoner."

"That was you?"

"That was I."

Then nothing was said for a long time. Another match was lighted and showed in a sudden gleam across my window.

I tried again to move the hand John had fastened in his, but he would not loosen his grasp. I moved nearer, for my arm ached, and the bed creaked a bit as I moved.

"Aren't you careless?" asked the sec-

ond voice, and then followed something whispered.

"No," the other man replied, "and why should I care. I might as well end my days in prison as outside—now."

"But not as a traitor!"

The second voice was all at once stern—with a military sternness.

"Oh, there's not a soul in this place who could understand us. The only names on the register are English and German—and there's no one awake."

Then I realized with a shock that I was an eavesdropper, and my cheeks burned in the dark like coals. I'd never done a dishonorable act, like listening or prying, and the affairs of my neighbors had had small interest for me.

It had been a pleasure—a pleasant sensation at least—to hear the strange tongue again, and the whole had seemed like a story, a bit from a novel.

I tried to speak loud enough so my voice could be heard and my presence betrayed, but I produced no sound at my first attempt, and as I considered whether I should wake John by wrenching away my hand, it came to me in a flash that this prisoner of a government whose relentless methods I knew, was an Englishman, suffering as my father might have suffered if we had not escaped through the influence of our friends.

When I remembered that, I lay perfectly still, and my blood stung in my veins as I saw their wretched captive shut away from sight and sound of men on the "egg-shaped rock."

If I had been poor and the man had not been an Englishman it might have been different; but I was rich, and my husband was richer still, and change and adventure were dear to us both. Moreover, first and last I am an Englishwoman, and though I love my husband's country, my heart beats faster every time I see an English flag.

It is the same with Americans, I observe—true Americans, I mean. You may transplant them all you will, but the sight of the stars and stripes brings something to their faces no other emblem can.

John loves me all the better for it. He calls us the only perfect Anglo-American alliance, and many a time he's "stayed over" in a stupid town so I could see the

British soldiers march in a procession, or hear an oration by some prosy old magnate I'd seen when I was a girl at school.

All night I kept piecing together the story whose bits I had stumbled upon, building fantastic structures out of the fragments. And I even filled in the hint of the girl left to make an unhappy marriage while her lover was sent out of the way.

Now, if afterward I'd gone to sleep like a Christian, the whole thing would have seemed no more than a dream, so it is this wretched wakefulness and my bothersome imagination that I have to thank for our predicament. My father told John when we were married that I was a fantastic piece and would get him "into trouble yet," and sure enough I have!

It is one o'clock, but I am not in the least sleepy, so I'll describe the "predicament" and the people who are suffering with us. If anyone were to look around my cabin and study its tapestries and pictures and the swinging desk and chair, kept horizontal by some curious mechanism that counteracts the motion of the boat, he would think I did not know the meaning of the word *suffering*. This very room, my "sitting-room" here (that is John's word), is said to be the most beautifully decorated cabin afloat, and our yacht, the *Chicola*, was one of the finest on the seas, five months ago. It is nearly five months since we've seen a really civilized land, and I have to look at the calendar where I've marked off the days, to make sure it's March, 1897.

We are in all, with the Captain and crew, forty-seven souls, but we have with us only four guests—Colonel Enderley, John's uncle (really a third cousin twice removed); my friend Lloyd Gresham, the Honorable Miss Gresham, named Lloyd for her father (a most confusing thing too, this naming girls and boys alike); then there is Nell, and there's Mr. Dennott. Nell is the most cheerful one of us all, and I loathe Mr. Dennott.

It's strange, Nell's being so cheerful. I didn't know her very well, and when she begged her father to take up my jesting invitation, the very night before we sailed, I almost hesitated. She is to be married on our return—if we ever do return—and yet she gets more buoyant and con-

tented every day we remain here. She is quite the opposite of the love-lorn maiden I feared, and has never shown the slightest eagerness for letters even when they were possible.

She must love the man, however. I found his miniature on her dressing-table and, being her guardian temporarily, of course I looked at it. An American girl resents a great many things an English girl takes as a matter of course. Nell flushed quite angrily when she saw I'd opened it, and held out her hand for it with an air that would have been insufferable in anyone else.

"He is very handsome, my dear," I said.

She smiled.

"But he doesn't look like a Tesgovian," I went on.

She smiled again and her eyes laughed.

"No, he doesn't," she said, and that was all the conversation there was.

But it is certainly puzzling. She is going to marry a nephew of the reigning King of Tesgovia. He is a great man in their little court at Beletsk, and someone said to me before we sailed, "The Duke of Btabura is the most Tesgovian of them all," while the man in the miniature is far more like a European. The wrong person pointed out somewhere, no doubt. Still, if it weren't so dark I could swear the face of the miniature to be that of an Englishman.

Nell is far less cold in manner than Lloyd and I, and chatters with everyone and tells all sorts of little intimate facts as confidingly as a child, and when you come to remember them, they are trifles and do not give the slightest clew to herself or her family. If she weren't so lovable I should call her deep, for Lloyd and I really tell her more about ourselves in a day than she has ever told us in all the time we've been cruising about together. Her father is rich and has social ambitions, and her mother is dead. That I knew before I met her, and though we've talked incessantly, I've learned nothing since, and shouldn't know even what I do from anything she says.

Lloyd is the one to be pitied. Her *fiancé* has deserted her. He was an American and we were all deceived in him. There was a stupid condition about their engagement. Her mother made it. He

was to go away and stay away for six months, and if he was then of the same mind he was to return. I think Ellen (Lloyd's mother) hoped the girl would fall in love with an Englishman before he got back. She has never quite forgiven me for marrying John, though I used to think she was in love with him herself.

Well, young Hamilton disappeared and stayed disappeared, caught, I suppose, by some other combination of rosy cheeks and gray-blue eyes. Though Lloyd's cheeks are far enough from rosy now. She believes he is dead. I never let her know what I think. She will find out the world soon enough—if she lives.

Dennott is a man John met at the clubs, an adventurous fellow who can tell a story, and who begged for an invitation after he knew Lloyd was coming. John and I have gotten nearer to quarrelling over that man than over anything in all our lives before. He is after Lloyd's money, but John can't see it. The very fact that he concealed his knowledge of Lloyd's coming is enough. He did conceal it. His surprise at finding her was overdone—so was his indifference.

Besides these people, I have my good Martha, worth all the other maids in the world, and Lloyd has a spiteful little creature, shy and fierce as a wild thing, named Seraphine—of all names! Nell brought no maid. She is never ill and she does her own hair—better than any maid ever did mine.

In spite of the fact that I've known Lloyd ever since she was in her christening robe, I find I've more in common with Nell than with anyone else on board, excepting John. Sometimes I think she is grieving in spite of her jolly ways. She was leaning on the rail to-night with her arms folded and her eyes full of tears. She looked very lonely against the slaty sky. I was close to her before she noticed me or I shouldn't have seen the tears. I knew at once what the child needed.

"Do you remember your mother?" I asked.

"No, but I want her," she answered, and for an instant I thought she was going to put out her hands to me. But she didn't. She turned instead the other way and called, "I'm going for your jacket. I'll be back in a minute."

I had on a close woollen reefer, but she

put my sealskin wrap over that, and I was glad to have it, the wind was so sharp. We walked up and down till dinner and I was half inclined to tell her my newest worry about Lloyd. Dennott is intriguing with Seraphine. The girl is influencing Lloyd, in some subtle fashion, in his favor, I am sure.

"I couldn't have believed she'd have been so weak!" I did say aloud, as I saw Nell glancing toward the stern, where Lloyd and Dennott were studying a map.

"She's very sad, and he haunts her with a kind of persistent sympathy that appeals to her," Nell answered. "If something doesn't happen to show him—as he is, she'll fall in love with him."

I wish Lloyd had Nell's self-reliant nature. I know that American lover was a scamp, but I hate to see her being consoled so soon. Romance is a part of youth. I believe too much of it has survived in me. I am glad Nell shares my opinion of Dennott. It's the nearest approach to a confidence she has ever made. I wonder how that Tesgovian duke will suit her! If he's a certain kind—but I can't understand it.

I'd like to mother that girl a little. The more I think of it the more I feel sure she needs it. Lloyd will cling to any support that's near. Nell will stand against any storm—till she breaks. I fancy I'm getting foolish about the girl. John says it's evident she never had a care or a trouble.

As for Lloyd, her mother trusted her to me. What can I do? She's twenty-four in years and a babe in wisdom. I wish I could land her in England to-morrow and let Ellen deal with Dennott. She'd make short work of him, though she knew he was coming with us. I fear she thought a little flirtation would further her plans.

It's half past two. I believe I could sleep. I cannot go on writing—writing—writing—with only a fraction of my thoughts on the page, and the rest wondering if I shall live to read over these forced maunderings in safety—or whether they will lie, with me, under the waves. Oh, it is all so strange—a part of a nightmare. But one must sleep sometimes, even when one is drifting around the South Pole, with a broken shaft and the chief engineer sick in his berth.

March 9, 1897.

On board the *Chicola*, in the  
Antarctic Ocean (or somewhere near).

It's wretchedly cold. And we're poking about under one or two useless sails. Dr. Bellew is doing his best for poor Perkins, the engineer, but he hardly knows what is the matter. For two days I have shared the nursing with Martha and the doctor. The sick man is quite out of his head, poor fellow.

Dr. Bellew and Captain Wells dined with us to-night. They miss Perkins terribly from their own dinner. Everyone was glum and trying to be amusing. Nell was the only one who really felt in good spirits. She said we made her think of Josiah trying to be cheerful, but I did not know the allusion.

It's a wonder the shaft didn't do more damage before the engines were stopped. So they all say. It broke the very day after Perkins fell ill. We'd not been long out of sight of the Falkland Islands. The thing has taken a bad twist and they've not been able to hold the parts together in the usual way. Any ordinary trouble the men in the engine-room could put right, but a broken shaft is a different affair. I suspect that it's very doubtful if even Perkins could mend it. And if it were mended, would it stand the strain long enough to get us back to any place of safety? There have been regular gales and we've blown a long way west and much too far south.

It is dreadful to think what Ellen and Mr. Caldwell (Nell's father) will be suffering. They knew our plan, but of course we had no intention of getting away down here.

The men seem to find some diversion in cards. But they leave everything the moment Captain Wells appears—or the second engineer. Now and then John makes an expedition to the shaft well, and comes up sombre enough. He feels his responsibility far too keenly. It is in no way his fault. He isn't sleeping to-night. I will read to him. My reading never fails to make him sleepy.

March 10th.

Perkins is weaker. The doctor does not leave him.

Dennott is making love to Seraphine and her mistress at the same time. Once

to-day I prevented the maid's meeting him by setting her at some work for me, on the plea that Martha had been too busy nursing to finish it. She glared for an instant like the beast she is. I've shown my dislike of her too plainly.

The doctor says Martha is invaluable. She was trained for a nurse before I discovered her and tempted her. I've always believed in that American who said, "Nothing is too much to pay for what you want." I am surer now of its truth than ever, though I paid well for Martha.

It grows colder and we're economizing heat, save for Perkins's cabin. Not so much as a rock in sight—nor a bird—nothing but water and watery sky and a wind from Niflheim, all fog and ghosts.

I talked to Lloyd about Dennott, but she says I misjudge him. He asks for nothing but friendship. And she lets him hold her hand! If we weren't almost on the edge of the world I should be distracted with Seraphine's intrigues and her evident jealousy of Lloyd, and with Lloyd's weakness and the man's cunning. As it is, Lloyd suspects my contempt and takes refuge oftener with Dennott. Nell is the only one who can hold her when Dennott wants her.

I find myself wondering whether it's her splendid courage that makes Nell's face so glorious, or just her hair and eyes. Dennott sees her beauty too, but she has repulsed him steadily. She can be as subtle and as clever as he, and he hates her for it. He knows she's impossible, and he keeps after Lloyd's fortune just as if she were the only woman on earth and death unheard of, and he makes love to Seraphine because she's a sharp tool, and neither of them stirs his snaky pulses to one flutter. He has the grace to change color sometimes, when Nell speaks to him, but his feeling for her is savage and ignoble. He'd beat her into submission with a club if he could.

The Colonel says nothing and does nothing but smoke. He declares he never did anything well but fight, and there's nothing to fight. He amuses himself now and then with the gun, and fires a "salute to the Pole" as he calls it, though, thank Heaven, we're yet far enough from that.

For two days we've been drifting north-

west ; indeed, we've not seen any ice, but it's frightfully cold. I've always complained of American houses in winter, but I'd like to find myself in the hottest !

Mr. Dennott forgot himself to-day. Perkins is no worse, but the suspense is miserable, and, though no one says it, we all know our position may be hopeless. Such a man as Dennott is too selfish not to show himself a coward at a time like this. Moreover, to-day he was out of temper with me, for Lloyd was sick in her berth and I'd set Seraphine at work in my cabin (after locking all the drawers).

We sat over the luncheon a long time, until no one was left but Nell and Dennott and myself. In the attempt to make conversation I had told the whole story of the night at Sassnitz. Till to-day Dennott had known only that we were going on a wild-goose chase in the south seas—nothing more definite—and he seemed strangely affected by my story. I never saw anyone who had just met a ghost, but I should fancy only fear of the supernatural could make a man's face look as his did. And whether it was fright or something else, all the evil of him seemed to come to the surface.

"And Mr. Dwight spends a fortune and risks half a hundred lives for his wife's dreams!" he sneered. "It certainly remained for the American husband to carry chivalry—and credulity—so far as that!"

I was so angry at the insult to John that I bit my lips. I wouldn't bark back at such a cur.

But Nell answered for me. Her words should have stung him, but he seemed hardly aware that she had spoken. He left us with a rude sort of abruptness, and when we went on deck Captain Wells was showing him on the chart exactly where we are. Later, I saw him poring over a pencil-map of his own.

March 12th.

Southward again in a gale. The line along the horizon is *ice*!

Lloyd is still in bed (disabled by terror and afraid to meet Dennott as well). Nell is reading to her.

March 13th.

Nell discovered John descending into the bowels of the boat and insisted on

going down with him. She came up all grease and dust, with her lips shut tight. Since then she is not herself. Her forehead is drawn into close lines and she notices nothing. She has bewitched John's reason, and they sit discussing impossibilities with an air of expectation that is worse than silence. It is all so foolish and futile.

It is still storming and the wind is fitful. Whenever there is a break we can see the ice plainly. For weeks now we have been drifting toward the west, but it is this occasional northeast wind that is worst. It makes me shiver to look at the chart. If it would only blow from the south.

Perkins is still unconscious.

March 14th, Morning.

I *must* sleep. All last night I smelt the smells of the English fields in spring and heard the fountain drip in the park at home.

Captain Wells and the second engineer are going to try another experiment. Nell is at the bottom of it. They are going to make another attempt to mend the shaft. I can see there's no hope of success. They are doing it to please Nell. She is down in the shaft-tunnel at this moment. She says she was brought up among machines. Her father invents, I infer. I overheard her questioning the young engineer.

"Was a broken shaft ever mended at sea, Mr. MacCleod?"

"Yes, miss; the engineer of the Bavaria got great praise for bringing her in, ye'll mind. But it's a deeficult thing, a fair deeficult thing to do."

"But why can't you do it if he did?" demanded Nell.

The lad, for he's hardly more, shook his head.

"He'd had years of experience, miss, but I'll try again if you put it so."

And they're trying. Nell has explained to me the way it's to be done, but the idea I gathered seems to amuse her. Never mind. My family never had anything to do with machines.

Afternoon.

We are no better for the experiment. No one can mend it.

And the ice is plain and jagged and



near and the cold ghastly. Perkins is muttering, but still unconscious.

March 15th.

*Something must be done.*

March 16th.

Nell has done it. Against the doctor's orders she walked into Perkins's cabin and took his hand, and when he opened his eyes she said: "The shaft is broken thirty feet from the collision bulkhead. We are drifting on the ice. MacCleod can't make the collar meet."

Perkins looked at her with his eyebrows drawn down, as John says he always looks when he's talking about his engines, and sat up, or tried to.

"You're too weak," she said. "I'll send MacCleod. He'll do what you say."

They report each step as fast as it's taken and he has shown no signs of relapsing. They're cutting out a stanchion to use as a bolt—and drilling holes in the shaft.

An hour later.

Perkins has become incoherent. O God—is there no way!

Later.

The doctor has been here to give me a stimulant. His words were better than the medicine.

Nell has taken matters quite into her own control. She settled herself as Perkins's nurse, bent over close to his ear, and took both his hands in hers.

"Sleep!" she said, "so you can help us. Sleep!" and he stopped muttering. Her touch seems to have a most inexplicable effect. Now he sleeps, still grasping her hands.

Later still.

He has made the broken shaft a part of his delirium. He is going on with his directions mixed with ravings about his family and a man he hates who, he thinks, is pursuing us in a gunboat. His delusion is so real that I've had to come away. It would need only that to make our situation even more horrible than it is.

They can't work fast enough to satisfy him, but MacCleod announces the completion of each step long before it's done, and he has finished most of the necessary directions.

March 17th, Morning.

It was time. He grows more and more wild as we fail to start. He says they are firing on us.

Night again.

They have had the greatest difficulty in following Perkins's directions. Some tool lacking. His delirium has increased so one of the stewards is helping to hold him. It seems

I was interrupted by the doctor looking for Perkins. He had escaped everyone and fled away to the engines. The men were terrified out of their wits when they saw him standing over them in the dim flare of the shaft well.

They'd almost given up and were resting in sullen silence looking down at the shaft. MacCleod was pleading with them, when all at once he stopped, and they turned around to see what had arrested him. Their nerves were pretty well on edge, and no sailor could have met that corpse-like figure in white without terror.

His eyes were blazing, and when he gave a command the men fell to work like mad and their strength was more than human. Nothing but force can get Perkins away, and the exertion has set him into a violent perspiration. He tears off the blankets the doctor carries him and prowls up and down driving the men, talking, gesticulating, working, like one possessed. He has cut and bruised his bare ankles, but he does not seem to know even that he's not dressed. About the work his mind is as clear as ever, but all the time he hears that boat bombarding us and sometimes in his violence he strikes the men for their slowness.

Midnight.

Perkins has fainted. But the repairs are finished. They have been getting up the fires for hours.

If she should not go!

Lloyd is looking at me piteously as I write.

I can't bear to stay on deck. It is lonely. I hope eternity isn't like this. I never want vastness again. I think of all the cosey corners that I know, my dressing-room and the—

She goes! She goes! Thank God.

The men are cheering. John's voice. He is com—

March 18th.

We are safe. Going northward, but slowly, for fear of straining the mended shaft.

From the moment the engine started Perkins's delirium began to yield. He is gaining.

Dennott is happy. He has fairly nauseated me with his satisfaction since yesterday, when he found out we'd given up the search. We are still a long way from land, and, as John says, we are provisioned for only one Antarctic voyage.

Nell is serious for the first time, and I am haunted by the thought of that Englishman on the egg-shaped rock. But I say nothing. Dennott's reproach to John rankles. That northeast wind blew us into far waters, and the poor fellow may be lying dead on some land we drifted past in the night.

March 19th.

A blot on the horizon. It may prove a boat. There is a suggestion of mist and the glasses make nothing of it. I shall think it a boat and that there are living people on her, till the sun comes out and proves that I am wrong.

The Colonel says if it would only turn out a pirates that he might have a "show," but the very idea, like Perkins's delirium, is too ghastly for a joke. What would become of a yacht, armed with only one senseless gun for firing salutes, if a pirate were to give chase!

Nell is doing more than her share of the nursing of Perkins. Even John notices how quiet she's grown, now that we've really started north. I wish he would come around to my opinion of Dennott. John is curiously unsuspicious for a man that knows the world. Besides, he has a masculine notion that women are always discovering mare's nests.

I don't know what possible harm Dennott can do us, but I am sure that the will is there. He is malicious and he's a coward. I suspect that he persecutes Nell. She seems to find Perkins's cabin a relief from something.

I think Lloyd is coming to her senses a bit. Seraphine lost her jealous temper yesterday and spit like the little wildcat she is. Lloyd told me about it, and asked if I had seen, or noticed, anything between her maid and Mr. Dennott.

I told her what I knew. It was not pleasant, for she's such a child one has to use terribly plain language. I said, of course, that I didn't believe the man cared at all for Seraphine, that he was merely using the maid as a tool to work on the mistress.

She flashed out at that in quite a spark of indignation, and withered my hint that it might matter to her what sentiments he cherished. Since then she has shown a very proper spirit, and is plainly disgusted with him and with herself.

Later: Evening.

The boat has disappeared in the darkness and the mist is fast becoming a fog. It is cold, and blowing briskly. We are using just enough steam to keep from being carried backward on our course. This region is almost uncharted, and Captain Wells prefers to stay where we are till daylight.

Nell had been having a long talk with Lloyd when I looked in on them to say good-night. Both were bending over the picture of Hamilton.

"He is dead. He would have come back if he had not been killed," Lloyd was saying. The tone in her voice was new to me.

Dennott scowled at Seraphine to-night when she came on deck to bring Lloyd's rugs, and the girl seemed frightened. I dislike her. She is neither honest nor good, but I won't have her bullied under my own roof, even if it is only the roof of a yacht.

If it is after midnight. If I can sleep it won't seem so long before I know whether that was a boat or a picture in the mist. If it was a boat, she must have been sailing away from us. The search-light shows nothing on the sea. I wish we'd found our Englishman on the rock. His fate seems more dreadful than ever, now I know what the horrors of this waste can be.

Saturday Morning, March 20th.

I have slipped down here to my writing-desk more for the sake of seeming occupied than anything else. But I sha'n't be able to keep long away from the deck.

*The boat was no boat, but an island, an oval sort of hump in the sea. If it should*



be the "egg-shaped rock"! We are steering now directly for it, though it was behind us on the west when the sun rose.

Mr. Dennott's conduct is extraordinary. He has at last betrayed himself. From the moment John gave the order to turn back, the man followed him about offering endless objections. Finally he urged the condition of Perkins and the risk of our being again disabled.

John answered, soothingly.

"Of course we must go back," he said. "You wouldn't have me pass that rock and never stop!"

"But no one was warned of this!" snapped Dennott.

"Warned!" John's voice was less soothing. "See here, Dennott, I don't expect to find either man or beast on that island, but I shall stop. As for danger, there's always danger——"

"Danger, but not crime," Dennott interrupted, viciously. "Kidnapping, even to please a woman, is a crime!"

I turned and got away before Dennott saw me. If he had spoken to me in the tone he used to John—even John's long-suffering has its limit, and I pray Heaven we may reach home without a scene.

Why *shouldn't* this be the egg-shaped rock? I hardly dare think. It is hundreds and hundreds of miles from any Falkland Islands. Of course it cannot be.

Almost noon.

Nell came to call me and I find my desk unlocked. I must have turned the key before the lid was close enough to catch. I hope no one has been at the contents. Seraphine was in the room when I came down and it made me suspicious.

We have been anchored here now for two hours. As we got nearer I was more excited than I liked to say. So was everyone, for that matter. Dennott seemed making an effort to control himself. He used every possible means to conciliate Lloyd. Seraphine has "confessed" that all she said to her mistress was a fabrication. She is completely under the man's thumb. But Lloyd does not respond. Some instinct has at last taken flight. The bare thought of rivalry with her maid has sickened her. She will be as obstinate in her distrust as she was in her childish confidence.

John—I can hardly believe it—still laughs at me.

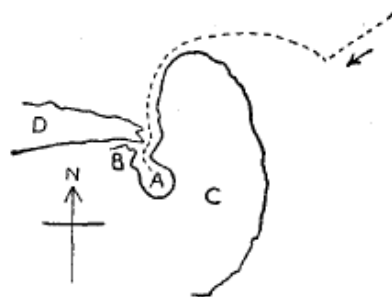
"Dennott's no villain," he says. "Coward, just plain coward! Folly to be angry. There are such chaps, you know, good fellows till they're in a hole. Then they snarl. Don't waste any wrath on him, Celia. He's afraid!"

I believe I am fated not to see myself vindicated. I do dislike the idea of being thought petty and suspicious, or worse still, melodramatic.

This writing seems the only way by which to kill the time. Nell is as restless as I am. She would have gone with the exploring party, but at the last minute Dennott suddenly changed his mind and joined them. The man looked anxious—desperate. What can be the connection between his fright and this island!

The Colonel promised me to see that no harm came to John. There are six in the party, John, the Colonel, Dennott, and three of the sailors.

I have made a map of the island as far as I have seen it. The dotted line is our course and A is the Chicola at anchor; C is the egg-shaped part we saw first, and B is a headland or little promontory that shuts off our view from everything but a low, reef-like stretch of rocks (D) that form one shore of the channel by which we entered. The egg-shaped part is so high that it seems to rise like a precipice from the basin where we are lying. On all sides but one we have lost the sky.



One o'clock.

This is getting unbearable. Where can they be! I can't stay here. I can't stay on deck. Where *is* John! He wouldn't leave me in this suspense unless——

Some time in the Night, March 20th or 21st.

I couldn't write any more this morning. I doubt if I shall do much better

now. But it's become a habit—writing. I can't read. I should interrupt every line to live over the day.

I bore it as long as I could—the waiting. Then I persuaded Captain Wells to send Nell and me over to the height I marked B on my map. We arranged a set of handkerchief signals with Lloyd.

It was a scramble, landing, but we managed it, and what was harder, we managed the climb up the rocks. I never saw such wicked rocks as those that form the ridges of that miserable island. They jut up into sharp points like the teeth of a saw, and each of these points has a saw-like edge that tears and cuts. It was bad enough on the headland, but what lay beyond seemed worse.

Nell remarked a queer thing that we remembered afterward. All these jagged teeth either rose straight up or projected toward the west.

Once on top we could see the whole place. There were two islands stretching away a mile or more, the one we were on, a continuation of the egg-shaped part we had seen first, and another curving away to the southwest, a sterile wilderness of rocks. These rocks were the worst of all. Nell said that with her eyes half shut she saw thousands of bony arms "stretched out to grasp some invisible prey." It was uncanny.

Between the two islands there was a fairish width of water, which was nearly closed at our end by the promontory on which we stood. There was barely room here for a small boat to pass, but the far entrance was wide. Midway of our island was a patch of scrubby bushes and what might be a boulder, or a small house. Even there the rocks were heaped together in a most awful and desolate fashion, and save for our boat, there was no sign of inhabitant anywhere—bird or beast or human being.

We waved our handkerchiefs once to show that we could see nothing, and set our eyes to the glasses again.

I was the first to discover a figure crawling out of the shadow of the brush. Then followed another, then another, dots creeping out on the surface—one, two, three, four—until we counted six, and then I dropped my glass. I was trembling with relief and my arm was un-

steady, but Nell kept her glass at her eyes and—"There's a seventh!" she cried. "There's another man!"

Before they were within hail we had scrambled down again, gone aboard, and sent the boat back to the shore.

The very air seemed to hold its breath as we waited. The waves scarcely moved the boat. Nell's cheeks burned. Lloyd clung to me for the first few minutes, then walked over to the ladder and stopped there, looking down at the green water, not stirring.

The excitement among the men was so tense I feared Martha had said too much.

At last John stood on the nearest ridge of rocks looking down on us, and I cried out to him, "John!" and he answered me, "We've found him, Celia," and he turned and put out both hands, and the Colonel drew himself up beside my husband and they held between them a strange figure.

And the cheers broke out again and again, but as they brought him up the ladder the sound died into murmurs of pity, for the man was weak and worn to a dreadful pass; that everyone could see.

Then all at once I heard Lloyd's voice. Such a cry! I didn't know she had soul enough for so much feeling. It shivered all through me, and the men turned and looked at one another and there was a perfect silence.

I thought Lloyd must have fainted, but she hadn't. She stood with one slender arm about the stranger's queerly clad body, and his arm rested on her shoulder, and her face—well, I suppose some such change immortality will make. I didn't know it was in the girl.

And the man. He did not even look at us, for his eyes were fastened on her.

Before anyone had spoken, Doctor Bellew had interfered and carried him off. But it was Hamilton. So much I knew, for I remembered him well. And it was an American, not an Englishman, we had saved after all.

It was two o'clock when they came aboard. They had been away between three and four hours. First they had made a long search on all sides of the egg-shaped portion of the island. And even after they had found the prisoner they could not at

once start on the difficult journey across the rocks, his weakness was so great.

I was eager to be off, out of sight of the place. But MacCleod, under Perkins's directions, had spent the day overhauling the shaft, already weakened by a few days' use, and he needed another hour. We had been going at less than half speed and Perkins decided it must be still further reduced, so that an hour more or less seemed no great matter.

Moreover, one of the sailors of John's party had discovered a spring (K) and it appeared to Captain Wells a providential opportunity to replenish our supply of water.

The doctor had ordered a fresh imprisonment for Hamilton. He is not to be allowed to talk until he is stronger and he has been all day under the influence of some sleeping-potion. It has saved him,



A, Basin.  
B, Headland.  
C, Egg-shaped Rocks.  
D, Reef.  
E, Slavodska.  
F, Bushes.  
G, Hut.  
H and I, final positions of Slavodska and Chicola.

no doubt, from madness or brain fever, but as I sat on deck watching them tumble the barrels of water on board and looking up at the walls of that curious harbor, I was impatient to hear his story and thought the doctor's arrangement very arbitrary.

It was four o'clock when the small boat was pulled up and fastened in place, and we began crawling out of the basin into the channel.

I took my glass and stood by the pilot-house, hoping to get a glimpse of the remoter parts of the islands as we cleared the headland, but I had no more than fixed my gaze on the opening when a roar like a blast of thunder made me drop the glass and stare with naked eyes first up into the sky and then straight ahead.

There, clearly in my line of vision, clean

against the sky, stood out another boat. She lay peacefully enough at anchor between the two islands, but rags of smoke still hung over her stern and floated lightly straight up in the still air.

I looked to see if we were hit. It had been no more than a blank shot sent as a warning.

As I turned toward the place where John had been standing with the captain, I saw that Dennott was beside me, and, instead of alarm, his face showed a pleased excitement.

"That means we must stop," he said, quickly. (His expression had changed as he met my eyes.) "They want to speak to us."

Our progress through the channel had been slow, but we showed no signs of stopping, and even while Dennott was speaking, came the sound of a second shot. The noise of the echo, of stones rattling down from the bluff (this time it was not blank shot), of the captain's orders, and of Dennott's voice made one horrid confusion. The spray wet my face where the stones splashed up the water about our bow.

"Are you mad?" It was Dennott again, shouting at the captain. "Stop! or they will blow you in pieces!"

I put up my glass. I wasn't thinking much about Dennott. It was the boat—I had recognized her flag. We were going a little faster, but a crippled spaniel cannot outrun a greyhound. I knew those boats launched in the harbor of Beletsk.

She was under way, making for the farther opening between the islands. I heard John speak, but I could not take my eyes from the glass. The cruiser kept firing as she went. Then a higher point of rock cut her off. She disappeared southward. John had me by the arm.

"Come below; you mustn't stay here!" he said.

"Which way," I answered, "which way will they turn? If they go south we could put back. She's too big to run in here." I knew there was no hope for us in the open.

There was another shot. It tore up the water an eighth of a mile away. Then the higher rocks again cut us off. The next

time she had no chance to aim, but we saw *she had turned north*.

Dennott was beside himself. He raved. No one noticed him. I knew things that happened in Beletsk—in the governor's palace, in the prisons—outside! So did John. Here—with no witnesses—no end to be gained—No: we'd not stop.

Captain Wells (he was as calm as when I first saw him standing in the door of a New England farm-house) had set the sails to catch the little breath that was springing up.

The gunboat was coming straight toward us now—not more than half a mile away—firing—firing—all the time. She had two guns in her bow. The noise was like the end of the world. A horrible breaking up of everything—a kind of maelstrom in the midst of all that peace around us. The waves rose in great leaps under our very sides; we rolled in the turmoil made by the bursting shells. The gun in our bow was worthless to us, of course. I saw the Colonel look at it. He was at work—with the sailors. Not that work seemed of any use.

I couldn't go below. John stowed me as safely as possible, and left me for an instant. There was something fearful in the silence of the men as they obeyed orders. All the blood in my body seemed settling in a sharp pressure about my heart.

There were splinters falling around us, as Nell came quickly across the deck. She lifted the glass in my hand.

"Look!" she cried. "Look! Do you see the flags?"

"Yes—Teskovia——"

"No: the other." Her hand clenched on my arm in a grasp that hurt.

"Yellow, with a coat of arms?" My hand shook.

"That's the flag of the Duke of Btatura, the man I'm to marry." Her face was dreadful to see. "I will kill myself, but I will not fall into his hands."

She spoke very fast, I thought in a whisper. It must have been loud or I couldn't have heard. They were nearer. The aim was truer.

"It was to please my father. There was another—I thought he had deserted me—But there may have been treachery——"

All at once her words broke through my

absorption. I saw it—all she meant. The long winter at Beletsk—the Duke whose marriage to the daughter would cancel debts to the father—the other man—disposed of—the girl piqued—half pleased by the handsome Duke—badgered by her father—the horror of the revulsion——

Then John was there with his, "Go, dear; go below. I'll come in a minute," and I was answering, "With you; I stay with you, John"—then a shock that tore us apart, and flung Nell and me against the foremast. When we could see, there was John's body like a shield in front of us, arms outstretched and blood dripping from one wrist.

I bound it quickly before I looked elsewhere. The pilot-house was shattered, the wheel jammed and useless. One of the sailors lay on the deck, and Doctor Bellew bent over him with a case of instruments open beside them.

The others were coming faster. It could not be long.

"I must tell Lloyd," I cried, and I knew as I left him that John was glad to see me go into better shelter.

Lloyd met me at the door of Hamilton's cabin.

"Sh-sh-sh!" she said. Even in that awful uproar she hushed me. "He must not wake. He shall not—to any new horrors. At the very last, if there is no hope——"

"But there is no hope, save in a miracle. Come and see," I implored. "Let us all be together, on deck."

"Not yet," she answered. "At the end, if there is time——" and she pushed me away gently and I went back. Love had made Lloyd great.

I had to cling to everything as I made my way up to John. We rocked in a wallowing, horrible fashion.

The men had worked like heroes. Now they waited. Most of them neither cried nor swore. Some of them knelt. It troubled me to see the cook in his white cap sobbing by the companion way, and Sam, the cat, rubbing against Nell and looking up anxiously at her and us.

Nell took the frightened creature in her arms and it settled down trembling. (I laid my hand on its neck and it was purring—a comfortable little bubbling of contentment.)

The mainmast was split and fallen from the middle. The yacht had swung around and lay spent, heaving and sinking with a kind of wrenching groan.

Doctor Bellew still worked over the wounded man. He did not look up, even when part of the rail was shorn off almost at his right hand.

It was all in a moment. I saw everything as if it were quite unreal—as if I were looking into a glass and had no part in the panorama.

The sailors had bared their heads. Everyone was silent. All the time the black thing was coming—death hurling itself upon us. John's arm was around me. I put out a hand to Nell, but she was gone to Lloyd. If there is a brave deed above another it is to go down into the dark inside of a sinking ship and wait death in a cage. I couldn't have done it—unless John had been there.

And then I saw Dennott coming up from below with a long strip of white, from the bed linen, waving on a stick. He struck out brutally with the stick as the white rag was torn from his grasp.

After that no one moved. I felt John's clasp tighten quickly. They had withheld their fire for a little, so as to load both guns at once. They were close, so close they could have made fragments of a bigger boat than ours. The cat was crouching under the broken mast.

I held the glass. I saw the gunners waiting the instant to fire. I closed my eyes and—the very foundations of the sea seemed vomited up. One loud explosion—the last and worst, I thought, if I thought at all, then another more loud, and in our very ears; and, after, a more fearful rocking and wallowing of the yacht, and from John just two words: "My God!" Then I felt the glass taken out of my hands.

Something I had not expected in the tone and more than all, the withdrawal of the glass, made me open my eyes. At first I could not make it out at all. The cruiser was gone.

The sea was beaten and broken into great billows of foam and two huge masses of a hull were just sinking out of sight. And it was *her* fragments, not ours, that were still falling as if they came from the sky itself. The air and the water were in awful commotion.

Then the captain's voice called:

"Lower the boat."

I could not move. "Thank God," and "O God, I thank Thee," and "Have mercy on their souls," I think I said, but whether aloud or to myself I do not know.

The men were awed and strange in manner, but they went swiftly to their posts. The cook was still sobbing by the companion-way; whether he knew that the peril was past or still feared I cannot tell.

Only the thought of Nell and her courage and of the other girl committed to my care gave me strength to move, to leave the spot where all the awfulness and wonder stared me in the face. But I went down and told them. What, I hardly know. Both looked at me solemnly like souls out of another life, and I kissed them, and left them, and went back.

It was some time before Nell came to me. Lloyd had fainted and needed her. I had the glass again and was staring at the sea. Nothing but fragments floating everywhere. Of all the hull there remained only one piece of any size, a coop-like bit that bobbed and wavered on the side toward us. There was nowhere any sign of anything human unless the dark things on the coop-like raft could be men.

Our boat was making for it. Then it toppled over and sank. But the boat kept on. It was not too late. As I watched it returning I could distinguish the figures of two men. I looked and looked, and as I looked I cried out with dismay. One figure lay prostrate in the bottom of the boat, but the other that sat erect and nursed a wounded arm had the face of the miniature I had found lying on Nell's dressing-table and opened.

Nell heard, and she too raised the glass. It fell from her hands to the deck, and when I turned to promise her protection she was gone. But I saw Martha follow, and knew she was safe.

"She must 'ave struck a 'idden rock and 'er speed was hawful," I heard a sailor say. Then I remembered the teeth all pointing west. And she was coming straight in the opposite direction.

But the explosions? Were they steam—or the magazine? I suppose no one will ever know. Those horns of rock might

have gored sheer beyond any false bottom ever made.

I was hardly curious as to the approach of the boat. Indeed I could think of nothing, but longed to go away to my own cabin and kneel with a thankful heart, alone, and give praise to God.

I had forgotten Seraphine. I am ashamed that it was so, but I did not know what had become of the girl, when I saw her standing not far from Dennott, who lounged against the stump of the mainmast. He held a glass of wine in his right hand.

And then there happened something strange and sudden, a thing I had wanted with all my heart, and yet I felt no triumph at the moment, only distress and horror. For when the man of the miniature set his foot upon the deck his eyes fell on Dennott, who stood, once more erect and confident, with the empty glass in his hand, and without a word of greeting or gratitude he turned to John and demanded, sharply:

"How does *he* come here?"

Dennott's eyes turned first to the companion-way. I saw the glass shake, but before the question was fairly spoken it had steadied and his air was as confident as before.

The stranger repeated his question.

"How comes that fellow here?"

"He is my guest," John answered, coldly. I thought that he returned the other's excited glance with some contempt.

"Your guest!" The man put his hand under his belt. "Then your guest writes this," and he pulled out a paper. One corner was wet, and tore as it came out. It was the paper of the Chicola. I knew it, for it was made for me. He held it toward John. I could see that the heading was gone, but I knew my paper.

"Read it," said the Colonel, and John read:

"To the Agents of the Government at Beletsk:

"The prisoner, R—H—n, has been taken away to-day, March 20, 1897, by the yacht Chicola, owned and commanded by John Dwight, an American. The yacht has a mended shaft, and can easily be overhauled. She is bound for San Francisco."

It was signed with a cipher.

A sound came from the throats of the sailors crowding closer. Some of them started forward.

"How do you know this man wrote the letter, and how is it in your hands?" John's voice was still unbelieving.

"It was found in the hut on the Île d'Œuf and brought to me for the cipher that no one else could read." (The answer was quick and straight from the shoulder.) "It is the hand of the man who swore to the prisoner's guilt. I heard his denunciation, and I saw him write and sign his deposition. He is a Tesgovian spy."

"I am an Englishman," Dennott broke in, furiously, "an *Englishman* and the British flag protects, even if the American can't. Who are you to dare insult a British subject?"

"You know who I am." The accuser's look did not move. "This is the second time I have overtaken you in a crime. The first time you would have kidnapped a woman—for mere——"

"The woman you wanted to marry," Dennott sneered. "But you're beaten there. She's dead."

In his triumph Dennott overlooked the confession of his words, for they had worked a fearful change in the man's face.

I was about to speak, forgetting how unwelcome this Duke of Btabura must be to Nell, when, with a sudden motion, at some order from Captain Wells, four sailors closed on Dennott and he disappeared from the deck. John says he will not appear again. There was no hint of triumph in his face as he went—only hate.

The Duke had turned to the other rescued figure; a common sailor, he seemed, with a boorish and unpleasant countenance. He had speedily come to himself, but appeared unable to stir, through fear or obstinacy.

"He owes his life to being set to guard me," his companion said.

I thought he looked at the loutish creature kindly. In spite of my knowledge, I could not dislike this stranger with the foreign coloring and the English accent. He could not be altogether ignoble, for the sailors had found him supporting the heavy weight of his stupid comrade at the risk of his own life. (He had strained



one arm, already hurt, so it stiffened helplessly after the rescue.)

As I watched him, more puzzled at each glance, Martha appeared.

"Miss Caldwell is all right, Ma'am, only a little white and queer," she said.

I was turning over the Duke's words, "To guard me!" What did he mean?

The sailors were clearing the deck. The boat had set off once more. We were swinging lumpishly around almost on the very scene of the explosion and the busiest group of carpenters and engineers were still working with anxious energy at the wheel when I followed John and the Colonel below.

The stranger was already in dry clothes, and seated before a luncheon that showed the dilapidation of the cook's spirit. But the luncheon did not matter, for he touched no food, and though his face was pale and his whole attitude oppressed, he sipped the brandy without pleasure and it brought no color to his cheek. I felt like a traitor to Nell, but I could not help liking him, and something in his voice was familiar.

"Why was that man 'guarding' you?" I asked him, abruptly. "Because of the danger?"

"I was under arrest," he answered.

"Arrest! That seems impossible," I rejoined. "Who had authority?"

He set down his glass and fingered the bread absently for a moment. Then he lifted his head and looked at us. All the animation had gone out of him. He wasn't the same man that had confronted Dennott. But though his tone was lifeless it was clear, as if he made a weary effort to be courteous to the curiosity of his hosts. His first words did not answer my question.

"I am an Englishman by birth," he said. "My mother was a Buckingham from Exeter. My father was a merchant of Beletsk. In the end he gave up his home and became an English citizen. After they died, I travelled—finally to the home of my father. He had loved the language, had liked to speak it with me. The country was at war. I found myself in the quarrel. It was easiest to stay. I was made an officer—but it was a little court—my duties were often diplomatic—partly because I spoke two languages as my own."

He stopped, apparently forgetting us, and broke the bread in small pieces and laid the pieces in a row beside his plate. Then, resting his elbow on the table, he raised a glass and looked at it a long time.

"But why did they arrest you?" asked John. I had listened in silence, not comprehending. What was this story about the merchant, his father? A duke's father! I was dull and waited stupidly while he spoke.

"But for the escape of the prisoner I should have been left with him, on the island," he went on. "The reason I do not know. Perhaps I knew too much of—Perhaps—" He lifted the glass again, and set it down suddenly. "A year ago last November an American gentleman came to Beletsk—and his daughter—" He fell silent again.

"An American and his daughter," repeated the Colonel, impatiently.

The man looked up quickly and flushed.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "They spent the winter there. I knew them well. After two months I went to the father and asked him if he would accept me as a son, if it pleased his daughter. He refused me, with much heat. That night I learned—what I might have seen before—a nephew of the King had made the same request—and been accepted."

"Accepted by the father or the daughter?" I asked, sharply.

He did not hear me. Seraphine had opened the door into Hamilton's cabin and we saw Lloyd beside his berth and his eyes, opened again, resting on her face. For an instant I thought the man's composure was gone. His look hurt me like a sick child's. But he did not stop.

"The next day I was ordered to accompany a political prisoner to this island. I was not alone in command. I did not even see the prisoner. I was closeted with the commander when he was taken ashore. When I returned to Beletsk the marriage was arranged. She was gone. There were spies everywhere, though the worst, the one you have on board, was in England—arranging a rich marriage. I was morose. It was seen. It had been said my suit was favored. Perhaps they feared revenge—some treason. The Duke kept the King uneasy. Some rumor of your expedition reached the court. The

Slavodska was fitted out for—the Duke was in command. No one dreamed you would really find the island. It was a pretext to be rid of me.”

“But the American girl,” I broke in, “where was she?”

“I did not know. The Duke had given out that she was in America. I posted a letter beyond the frontier. There was no reply. I knew nothing—till to-day—till this——”

“And *you*—you are *not* the Duke!” I rose and I must have startled him with my eagerness, I had been so quiet, so stolid, before.

“I—the Duke—madam?” His surprise brought back no trace of animation. “I am Edward Buckingham Gavelsod—Gavelskoid in Tesgovian.”

“And the Duke—where——”

“Gone down with the Slavodska—happiest even dead.” The bitterness—the despairing—of the tone brought a sudden burst of recollection.

“You were on the island of Rügen, at Sassnitz, last September,” I cried. “Now I know your voice.”

He seemed amazed.

“And it is your miniature, *yours*, not his—and you think he told the truth—that man—O John, this is Nell’s secret! I must go to her—I must tell her——”

But Nell was there, in the open door, her face still very white and her eyes shining.

He rose, one hand on the table to steady himself. A napkin fell at his feet. We forgot to breathe. He did not move, but she came from the doorway into the room, and as she came, she walked at first swiftly with firm steps; then all at once something in his rigidity seemed to shake her. She stopped—and the dazed look went out of his eyes and a splendid color and energy flashed into his face. He sprang to meet her—and John and the Colonel and I somehow found ourselves on deck, and I was shaking hands with both at once.

Auckland, of course, not Falkland. It’s just come to me.